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# 'Politics: the art of PR'

Anthony I. Ashbolt

*University of Wollongong, aashbolt@uow.edu.au*

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# 'Politics: the art of PR'

## **Abstract**

THE art of politics has become the art of public relations. The Liberal public relations machine has trained its politicians to bark about Labor waging class war and pursuing the politics of envy.

## **Keywords**

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# 'Politics: the art of PR'

## UOW expert's election analysis

BY ANTHONY ASHBOLT

**T**HE art of politics has become the art of public relations. The Liberal public relations machine has trained its politicians to bark about Labor waging class war and pursuing the politics of envy.

It has even, in a stroke of fanciful fear mongering, conjured up a tradesman with designer tastes who expresses fear about his dreams of an investment property being dashed by a Party declaring war on his good self. The "tradie" concludes somewhat glumly that we should just "see it through" and "stick with this mob for a while".

The CFMEU's ad agency responded quickly by resurrecting the style of a film clip from Bob Dylan in 1965 with a series of placards telling us what workers really believe.

This version of "Subterranean Homesick Blues" hardly resonated with an audience that would have mostly missed the ironic historical reference.

That politics in Australia has become reduced to cheap ads and cheap ideas does not bode well for the future years of governance.

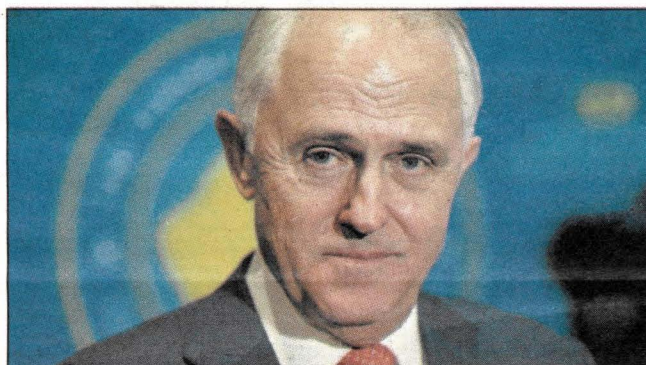
Take also the negative tone of much campaigning.

It was Turnbull who began framing the political narrative of the campaign in negative fashion.

Labor was promoting war on business, on ordinary



**ANALYSIS:** Dr Anthony Ashbolt, a senior lecturer in Politics at the University of Wollongong, says "the Liberal public relations machine has trained its politicians to bark about Labor waging class war and pursuing the politics of envy".



**TURNBULL:** Dr Ashbolt says there has "always been a difference between the image proffered by Turnbull ... and the Turnbull who was a merchant banker".

mums and dads, on the family home.

The slogans proliferated and the process was lorded over by the very politician who promised us a more calm and measured, slogan-free, political life.

Yet when Labor had the hide to turn negative against the Government, warning of imminent threats to Medicare, Turnbull reacted with shock and horror that such accusations could be hurled at a Government with

an untarnished record of innocence. The hypocrisy would be breathtaking if it was not so predictable.

The fact that the general public failed to see its predictability is a measure of the previous success of Turnbull's PR machine.

Many voters fear there has been a political climate change involving the transformation of Malcolm Turnbull. There has, however, always been a difference between the image proffered



**SHORTEN:** Dr Ashbolt says the Opposition Leader has "turned the fortunes of the Labor Party around to the point where it is at least competitive".

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by Turnbull, and further fabricated by a fawning media, and the Turnbull who was a merchant banker serving the interests of finance capital.

That Turnbull, the real one (if you like), "Mr. Harbourside Mansion" (in the immortal words of Peta Credlin), turned up on Q&A

### AT A GLANCE

#### Illawarra candidates

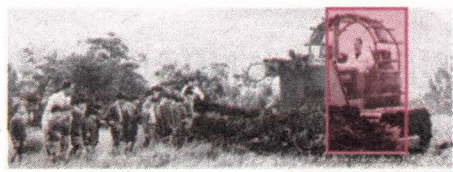
- **CUNNINGHAM:** Cath Blakey (Greens), Nathan Waters (Science), Michelle Blicavs (Liberal), Michelle Ryan (CDP), Sharon Bird (Labor), John Flanagan (NCPP)
- **WHITLAM:** Tom Hunt (Greens), Jan Mandelson (Nationals), Wayne Hartman (NCPP), Stephen Jones (Labor), Susan Pinsuti (CDP), Marcus Hewitt (Liberal)
- **GILMORE:** Steve Ryan (CDP), Ann Sudmalis (Liberal), Carmel McCallum (Greens), Fiona Phillips (Labor)

last Monday night [June 20] and even used an old Liberal trick by accusing Tony Jones of Labor bias. Stripped of his leather jacket, Turnbull was just another conservative politician reduced to questioning the independence of ABC journalists while simultaneously nodding in the policy direction of Rupert Murdoch.

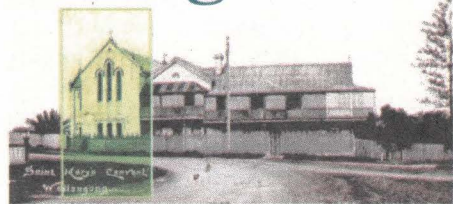
Strangely enough, there has been a political transformation of sorts involving Bill Shorten. From being a nowhere numbers man, he has matured into a political figure capable of presenting a credible policy package and exposing the fault-lines in Liberal strategy.

He was never going to match the popularity of Turnbull in the polls, partly because he is rough around the edges and lacks genuine skill as an orator.

Nonetheless, Shorten has turned the fortunes of the Labor Party around to the point where it is at least competitive, even if not quite competitive enough in all the marginal seats where it matters.



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